

Please replace the following section beginning on page 31, line 1, with the following section which is marked-up to indicate the changes:

ABSTRACT

Methods A-method and apparatus for forwarding packets ~~including fixed length cells~~ in a multistage interconnection network are provided which ~~are based on timestamping~~ timestamp packets using a substantially system-wide timing reference and a ~~novel application~~ of merge sorting variant to restore packets to the proper order, using the timestamp information carried in the packets. ~~A feature of the invention is a method for determining One implementation determines~~ when packets passing along different paths in the network can be safely forwarded, even when no packets have recently been received on some of the paths. ~~This is done using a mechanism that forwards paths, by forwarding~~ status messages along otherwise idle paths, ~~where the paths.~~ The status messages provide information that can be used by downstream components to allow them to determine when packets passing over other paths can safely be forwarded. ~~The invention One implementation simultaneously resequences~~ packets being delivered to all n outputs of the multistage interconnection network. The resequencing operations are distributed among a plurality of switching elements making up the interconnection network. ~~Sorting of packets can be accomplished by a plurality of switch elements thereby resequencing ordered sets of packets in a plurality of source buffers into ordered sets of packets in a plurality of destination buffers.~~